

HYPERTENSION

Arizona Department of Corrections
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program
HEP 1010-01/06

Hypertension, high blood pressure, is also known as the **Silent Killer**. **WHY?** Because it usually has **no symptoms**.

Hypertension may be a complication of other diseases. High blood pressure occurs when the force of the blood flow on the arteries is too great. High blood pressure, if left untreated, can lead to heart attack or stroke.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Blood pressure is measured by two numbers, one on top and one on bottom. What do the numbers mean? The top number, systolic, is the pressure in the blood vessels when your heart pumps. The bottom number, diastolic, is the pressure between beats. Everyone's blood pressure varies some; it takes several readings over time to diagnose high blood pressure. Have your blood pressure checked regularly.

SYMPTOMS OF HYPERTENSION

If symptoms do occur, they are generally mild and may include:

- Lightheadedness/Dizziness
- Nosebleeds
- Frequent headaches

RISK FACTORS

Some risks of hypertension are totally out of your control, such as being born to a family with a history of the disease. However, other risks are within your power to change.

UNCONTROLLABLE RISK FACTORS

- **Race**—Blacks are likely to have more hypertension
- **Age**—Blood pressure tends to rise with age
- **Gender**—Up to age 55, men usually have higher blood pressure than women
- **Family history**—Some families have more members with hypertension

TREATING YOUR HYPERTENSION

After your health care provider has diagnosed you as having hypertension, you may be given *medication* to treat your condition. The health care provider will find the right one(s) for you. You **MUST** take your medication as prescribed.

Also, **lifestyle changes** often lower your blood pressure:

- Follow a low fat/low salt diet.
- Reduce food intake if weight is a problem.
- **Exercise** - The American Heart Association recommends walking ½ mile/day
- **Stress Management** - For ideas, refer to *Common Sense Care for Anxiety*.
- **STOP SMOKING!** Classes are available

CONTROLLABLE RISK FACTORS

- **Smoking**—Smoking causes the arteries in your body to become less elastic, or stretchy, causing high blood pressure.
- **Diet**—Following a high fat diet causes the arteries to become plugged with a fatty substance called plaque. The plaque makes the arteries less efficient; the heart forces the blood through the arteries causing (you guessed it) high blood pressure.
- **Exercise**—Lack of exercise makes your body store energy as fat, instead of burning it off. Excess weight causes high blood pressure.

STRESS—Having a lot of stress in your life without any ways to deal with it can cause you to feel upset, causing hypertension.

Keeping your blood pressure in control, is a great way to help yourself live longer and have fewer health problems. The key to accomplishing this, is to follow your health care providers advice if you have hypertension, or prevent the disease from occurring in the first place.